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## “THE MORAL ASPECTS OF SOCIALISM.”

MR. BOSANQUET'S criticism of my article seems to call for some reply. I am constrained to repeat that I confined myself to what was after all an incident of "Social Aspects" and to a great extent implicit. My criticism, therefore, was not meant for an appreciation of the book as a whole; that had already been given, and I heartily subscribed to its terms of eulogy. But my attention was drawn to the fact that the book had been taken as a serious and fatal indictment of modern Socialism or collectivism, and that the readers of this JOURNAL might be interested in hearing the case stated on the other side, even by an *impar congressus Achilli*. My statement was necessarily "abstract," because I was mainly dealing with theoretic considerations, and it may have appeared one-sided, because it was mainly attacking a one-sided criticism. I granted all that the essayists had said in the way of qualification and discrimination; but, having regard to the total impression of the references to collectivism, I felt justified in stating that as a matter of fact the Essays had not only put the position of Socialism at its worst,—to which there can be no objection,—but made that "worst" a standard and sign of Socialistic copyright. And the main purpose of my article was to call attention to the fact that the essayist's representation of Socialism, while it might be true enough of popular Socialism, was actually an inversion of the truth as applied to educated Socialism. I ventured to suggest that there is growing up a more thoughtful kind of Socialism which has appropriated the truth of Individualism,—I dislike these abstractions as much as Mr. Bosanquet, but they have their use,—and has made it at once the foundation and the test of social reorganization. It was certainly not a part of my design to deal with Mr. Bosanquet's social philosophy as a whole (which I agree can be made to admit all that I contend for) or to quote him against himself. I am perfectly aware of the distinction which he has made between "Moral" and "Economic" Socialism, and it was against the ultimateness of such a distinction that I wished to protest; but I was confining myself to particular references in a particular book, which any one who has closely followed the movement of Socialistic thought can only regard as indiscriminating and misleading. I need only quote as a remarkable confirmation of my contention a remark by a French writer and critic of Socialism who I can hardly suppose to be

straining after "praiseworthy audacity" or to be more observant than Mr. Bosanquet,—

"He (Mr. Webb, as representative of Fabian Socialism) avows definite collectivist views, but the turn he gives them, the end he assigns to them, and the general spirit with which he inspires them would make them *unrecognizable in the eyes of a French or German collectivist*. . . . Mr. Webb does not wish to *hand over property to the incapable*. . . . Mr. Webb's chief concern is to assure each citizen, not an equal share of wealth or happiness, but an equal chance in life. Although much in his programme may seem illusive, yet it *cannot be said that he would break the spring of individual energy like the continental Socialists, nor does he demoralize the working classes by promising them happiness without work*. This point is extremely important. Socialism on the continent tends to demoralize the worker by favoring his incapacity and dissuading him from personal exertion. However threatening may be the position of Socialism in England . . . its *most earnest and prominent advocates do not sacrifice to it the first essential thing in life, 'the sense of responsibility and the love of effort.'*" \*

Even Mr. Bosanquet is forced to admit (somewhat grudgingly) that Mr. Burns and Mr. Webb are "relatively wise" on the subject of "Relief Works;" though he has tried to qualify his concession by suggesting that it is only a difference of degree; it is really a difference of kind. Mr. Bosanquet, however, makes the most of an obsolete and forgotten manifesto about the "free maintenance of necessitous children." I hinted that this was not a deliberate expression of Fabian policy, and could not be maintained in that form by the thinking Socialist. The Fabian Society is at this moment issuing a tract by Mr. Graham Wallas against "Free Meals," and the cleavage between the Socialism of the chair and of the street was significantly illustrated at the International Congress by what Mr. Bosanquet, I suppose, would call the "relatively wise" report of Mr. Webb on "maintenance" and the amendment carried against him by the Social Democratic Confederation and Continental Socialists. Mr. Bosanquet's "manifesto" and even his more recent "handbill" are merely signs of an attempt on the part of certain Fabians not to break altogether with popular Socialism.† The Fabian Society has issued a tract which contains a list of

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\* Paul de Ronsiers: "The Labour Question in England" (Macmillan), pp. 389, 390. And yet my critics (e.g. in *Speaker, Positivist Review*) declare that my version of English Socialism is unrecognizable and altogether "new." The italics are mine.

† The "Report" presented to the International Congress by the Fabian Society and issued as a tract seems specially designed to accentuate the divergence of view.

the errors it has worked out of and the problems it has not thought out, and this it has rightly taken to its credit. And I cannot help thinking that it would be fairer, as it certainly would be wiser on the part of philosophic philanthropists, like Mr. Bosanquet, to recognize and welcome this fact. I can quite understand the practical issue involved in a cheap and crude and mischievous propaganda. The Fabian Society may have sinned in this respect, but its propaganda is more and more directed to the middle classes; it aspires to being to English politics of the present generation what Philosophical Radicalism was to the last; and the next series of "Fabian Essays" will show what progress is being made in the direction of general political education. It can be judged (with some allowance) by its words, but still more by its works. It has influenced the Home Office, the London County Council, and the School Board, and consistently in the direction of maintaining the standard of life for the worker. It is already forming a school of Political Economic Science on concrete and historical lines. "The Tenants," "Sanitary Catechism," "Socialism, True and False," "Parish and District Councils," and Mrs. Webb's "Women and the Factory Acts" and "Sweating, its Cause and Remedy," are among the "penny tracts" which alarm Mr. Bosanquet so much. Mr. Bosanquet's suggestion (like the rest of his personal suggestions) that I am not familiar with Fabian policy is unfortunate. I have been a member from the first; I joined the small circle of which it originally consisted, because I believed in its attitude and in the ability and thoughtfulness of its leading members. And, finally, the suggestion that my version of Socialism is not representative is best met by the fact that the Fabian Society proposes to issue it as one of "the tracts." I contend, therefore, that I have some reason for thinking that Mr. Bosanquet's judgment upon Fabian Socialism, useful as it is up to a certain point, fails in perspective.\*

As regards Mr. Bosanquet's strictures upon my own shortcomings, I cannot but regret that I should be forced to follow the not very philosophical example he has set me of "the personal equation." I will content myself with saying that while Mr. Bosanquet was still a lecturer at Oxford I was a worker on the first Sanitary Aid Com-

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\* I have not noticed Mr. Bosanquet's suggestion that the Fabian Society may find it convenient to have two views, as it hardly comes within the limits of a philosophic discussion. I should certainly not be a member if I thought so.

mittee in London, and for a long time worked upon the Charity Organization Society (of which I had previous experience), and the Board of Guardians at Oxford. Although, therefore, I could not, even if I would, describe my experience as "profound," Mr. Bosanquet (apart from the argument of "authority") is scarcely entitled to dismiss my argument as academic. As a matter of fact, it is my experience, such as it is, that has forced me to the conclusion that there are neglected elements in the philosophy of the charitable movement. Then, again, Mr. Bosanquet (in a somewhat mysterious sentence) charges me with "hitting low;" but he can only indicate this by converting statements I certainly made into inferences I as certainly did not draw. I never said that, because the writers put character in the foreground, *therefore* they reduce material conditions to a negligible quantity: I simply said that as a matter of fact they were so reduced. Nor did I say that it showed an idealistic bias to insist that sanitary improvement was useless without a determination of the individual to have the work done: on the contrary, I suggested that it could not be left, in factories for instance, to the employer, and could only be effective if the individual employés had some control over their own conditions,—a remark which I observe Mrs. Bosanquet interpreted to mean state-machinery. Mrs. Bosanquet makes sanitary improvement in a factory depend "only" on the education of the employer; Mr. Bosanquet makes it depend in a home on the education, not of the landlord, but of the tenant. So that it is made to depend on "the individual" the general position is saved, and if I were to adopt Mr. Bosanquet's more convenient than convincing way in dealing with an argument, I might talk of "one-sidedness," "abstractness," and even "thinness" of view. In both cases, improvement can only come through a public opinion effectively exercised and having power. Sanitary reform is a crucial instance of the reform which must come partly from above and partly from below: it needs the co-operation of an advancing public sentiment, which is able either to enlist or coerce the individual interest concerned. What about sanitary legislation? What about improvements in Glasgow and Birmingham? Here we have public sentiment or the general will armed with power and depending for its effectiveness on the individual co-operation it enlists by force of the example, the education, or the felt benefit it gives to individuals. Will Mr. Bosanquet contend that the character of Glasgow citizens has been spoiled? Paradoxical as it may seem, I am unable "to grasp the

point" which at first sight seems so profoundly obvious,—that "the man who lives in the house is the only man who can keep it clean." I venture to think that if "cleanness" includes conditions beyond the tenant's experience and control he requires the co-operation of the "general" sanitary will and knowledge, the local vestry, and (not least) the landlord,—to say nothing of other material conditions needed to make the dweller "in the slums" sensitive to sanitary responsibility. A higher standard of living must be suggested by actual conditions of living. You can no more put "sanitary ideas" into a person who does not know or has not been made to feel what a sanitary condition is than you can put ideas of duty or of space into persons who have no experience of duties or of space. And granting that what would be in real truth an abstract sanitary idea could be passed from hand to hand in this way, is the question of increased rent or notice to quit not another material impediment? And what about domestic "work" and domestic laundries (a difficulty for which the Fabian Society has demanded the interference of the state), and the general depressing effect of low earning and low living upon energy of character and aspiration? Does Mr. Bosanquet think that the system of house-owning and management—the system of irresponsible subletting and middle-men—under which many of the poor live is of no moment? What if the state could be present at every bargain between landlord and tenants, and insist on the right as well as the duty of the tenant to be healthy? Mr. Bosanquet's illustration of the discouraging effects of model barrack systems is only relevant to his particular and conventional conception of Socialism. As I have contended throughout, the thing must be done not *for* but *by* the individuals; by the individuals, for instance, as self-respecting members of a self-governing community, whether it be the association of a workman's society or, still better, the association of a democratic municipality. The real defect of the "charity organization" stand-point is that it obscures the idea of "the state" as the community democratically organized for the attainment of the common good. The officials and almoners of a private society can never represent this idea whatever else good they may do; and the inspector can only represent it when the individuals of the community can feel he is *their* inspector, and they can only feel this when they can assert themselves against the pressure of landlordism and private capitalism. "State Socialism is mere bureaucratism, if it does not rest on self-government." It is in this sense that I agree with Mr. Bosan-

quet that sanitary improvement must come from below, that is, if it involves what I have called the popular or democratic control of industrial conditions. And this is what is meant by Socialism (in England). Not that the state as something outside individuals should, to take Mrs. Bosanquet's illustration, organize devices for making tea; and I confess I am surprised that philosophic students should generalize their conceptions of English Socialism from Schäffle's "Quintessence of Socialism" and Bellamy's "Looking Backward." It seems to me that it would be at once more philosophical and certainly more politic to recognize the higher side of the Socialistic movement (as for instance it is seen in England), and not to attenuate it, still less reduce it to or compare it with a lower level. Of course, State Socialism is a "thin" idea, if you choose (in the face of facts) to take a thin idea of it. Mr. Bosanquet seems to suggest that I endeavored to discredit the argument of "Social Aspects" by "dragging in" the Charity Organization Society. Nothing was further from my intention. But as the book has been accepted as the highest philosophy of that movement, I felt justified in extending the scope of my reference; and I can only repeat my hearty appreciation of the rare merit and value of a book I have ventured to criticise from a subordinate point of view. I have recommended and shall continue to recommend it wherever I can; and I regret exceedingly that my criticism should have been construed into any want of respect or consideration for writers whose services (I am thinking particularly of Mr. and Mrs. Bosanquet) to the cause of Social Reform, both practical and theoretical, have been of the highest value and interest. I simply wished to put the case for Socialism in a form in which it could be recognized as a reasonable idea; but I certainly did not hold a brief for either the voluntary or involuntary errors of Socialism as it is spoken or written. I will grant to Mr. and Mrs. Bosanquet, moreover, all the indiscretions of Fabian Socialism, but I am not convinced that it is either disingenuous or insignificant. I hope I may be allowed to follow up my provisional defence of "Socialism" as a reasoned idea of social progress by a more positive account of what I conceive to be its underlying principles. I confess that I think not only that what these writers take to be the "fuller" view of social progress, but Socialism itself, loses and suffers by the absence of a more discerning and sympathetic attitude on the part of "thinkers" towards the higher aspects of the Socialistic movement.—SIDNEY BALL.

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P.S.—I regret that I misrepresented Mrs. Bosanquet's point of view in her article on the "Socialistic Propaganda." It was certainly directed to what I may call the "previous" side of the Propaganda, and that it has a "previous" side cannot be disputed. But the errors to which Mrs. Bosanquet drew attention were at any rate made *bona fide*, and it would be interesting to have a criticism from the same competent hand of Mr. Mallock's equally previous "Classes and Masses" or the Individualist Propaganda.

S. B.

"THE MORAL ASPECTS OF SOCIALISM."

IN dealing with Mr. Ball's article on the above subject, Mr. Bosanquet makes an attack on the "leaders and spokesmen" of the Socialist movement, charging them with want of vision of the "possible good for industrial life," and of utter recklessness as to the effect of Socialism upon the masses of our large towns. I do not claim to be one of the leaders of the movement thus indirectly assailed, but several years of active propaganda in its behalf warrant me in writing as one of its spokesmen. As such I should like to know the warranty Mr. Bosanquet possesses for dismissing Mr. Ball's opinions as "academic," and at variance with the general tenor of Socialist teachings. It may be that a study-table is the best ground on which to gain knowledge of a democratic movement, and that the conclusions drawn thereon are more trustworthy than those of actual experience. I am well aware of the danger of those in public life failing to appreciate the full significance of movements which they aid or inspire. It is possible not to see wood for trees; and by analogy it may be that the real meaning and the ultimate effect of the Socialist movement may be unknown to us who are spending our time and energy in its behalf, and yet that they may be perfectly obvious to those who, like Mr. Bosanquet, sit in a calmer atmosphere and judge its ideals and tendencies by the cold, clear light of reason. But that "its leaders and spokesmen, as a whole, have not yet acquired . . . any real, effective care—the care born of knowledge and sympathy—whether or not the classes whom the movement affects are elevated or brutalized by its impact," is a charge which cannot be allowed to pass unchallenged. I have an intimate knowledge both of the leaders and speakers referred to which warrants me in denying *in*